1: Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1920)1932
FE11 Tallensi FE11

XXXIV

THE TALENSE (*continued*)

The Clan Settlement. The Family Compound. The Section-head (Yi-zut-kyɛma). *The* Ten'dan'. *The Territorial Ruler*

621 613 THE constitution of a Talense *tey* is identical with that of the Nankanse. The *tey* (Nankane *teya*) is divided into sections, all the inhabitants of which trace descent from a common ancestor, but each, again, has, as its own more intimate ancestral spirit, a less remote ancestor, from which that particular section takes its name and to whom 'section-', as opposed to '*tey*-', sacrifices, are offered. A section is *yi-zug* (Nankane *yi-zuo*). A section-head is *Yi-zug-kpɛɛm* (Nankane *yi-zuo kyɛma*).

At Tongo there are four sections, known as (*a*) Pusega, (*b*) Guŋa, (*c*) Korega, (*d*) Seug. The post of section-head of Pusega was vacant; as 'the funeral custom of the late *yi-zut-kpɛɛm* had not yet been held, his successor could not be appointed'.

The section-head of Guŋa is *Sayɛzaa* (my informant, see Fig. 63); of Korega, a certain *Basego*; of Seug, vacant, for the same reason as (*a*).

613 [76] *Election of New Section-head*: Heads of other sections met and consulted the *bay* (Nankane *baga*) to find out why the late head of the section had died. The soothsayer might say, 'It was because he did not give one of the cows, *sull* (Nankane, *sulle*), which he received for his eldest daughter, to his ancestor.' After the funeral custom his successor was appointed. 'The man who had the right to take the deceased's *bagere* (here ancestral shrine) was the one to succeed. This man was already known; the *bay* was only consulted about the funeral.'

The successor to the section-head was the 'senior' man in that section, but he was not necessarily the oldest: e.g. *A* marries a wife, *C*, by whom he has three sons, *D*, *E*, *F*, and three grandsons *G*, *H*, *I*, sons of *D*, *E*, and *F*; *A*, in his old age, marries a young wife, *B*, by whom he has a son, *J*. This son may be twenty years or more younger than *G*, *H*, *I*, but if *A*'s brothers are all dead and also *D*, *E*, and *F*, then *J* will become section head before *G*, *H*, or *I*, 'because *G*, *H*, and *I* call *J* father.'[1]

613 178 The tendency here, as almost everywhere in the Northern Territories, is for these hereditary section-leaders, who were really the back-

[1] See p. 279 [i.e. reference to similar practice among the Nankanse-A] [p. 346]

1: Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1920)1932
FE11 Tallensi FE11

new soil and the old. This new mound is a *bogere*. When the *bogere* comes, the *bagere* has become strong. When he wants to sacrifice he will say: "My mother, call your father."

'A mother's spirit has power over her son. Suppose your mother's spirit wants to punish (*ey*, lit. to "do") her son, and the father's spirit wishes to prevent her doing so, the mother will say to her husband, "Had I died while in conception, would you have had this child?"'

Among the Nankanse the word *bugere* or *bogere* is used only in connexion with a *bakologo* shrine. An ordinary *bagere* has no *bogere*, but when a soothsayer's shrine is made, in which is, e.g., the soothsayer's mother's mother's spirit, he will fetch earth from his grandmother's town from the *bagere* shrine of her father. This is brought home in a small pot and becomes the *bugere* or *bogere* of the *bakologo*. 'It gives the power to the *bakologo*.'

A Seance attended at Tɔngo: A woman had died from snake-bite, and after she had been buried a soothsayer was brought to her husband's compound to be consulted about the cause of her death. The family of the dead woman was represented by an Elder from her section. The ceremony began by the consultant holding the soothsayer's bag with both hands and saying, '*N' gyi i lugeri ka kye i nor*' (I hold your sides, but not your mouth). The soothsayer then began to rattle (see Fig. 71), and said, '*N ba Tin, n bol i, la i bol i banam, ka ba tana zin, mam mi nireba n zi wa, ka n po mi bay bol ma sere yi na bay de n be, te te*'. (My father's *Tin*, I call you, and you will call your fathers and they will come and sit down. I know these people sitting (here), but I do not know the reason that they call me. You will know what it is; give us).

He then began to sing:

'*Golugdan, Kanbung mwan lang kai bagere. Ti na bay surdan. Kpolebeo saam zeret; mam kpalim la popelimi koy yiri, ma mam kpelim mwee.*' (*Golugdan, Kanbung*, mere supposition is not (proper) soothsaying. You will know the one who is angry. Bad *dawa dawa* seeds spoil soup. I entered a hole [1]; I became infected with misfortune; I was obedient; now I have no house. Mother, I am still rattling). The soothsayer now emptied out the contents of his bag on the ground; the consultant held the end of the wand and went through the customary performance of picking out objects with it, the soothsayer singing the while. The wand seemed to search among the miscellaneous oddments, pounced on the hoof of a cow, on a fragment of a calabash,

[1] He refers to his having worked in the gold mines.

1: Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1920)1932
FE11 Tallensi FE11

on a gourd seed, on a hair ball from the stomach of a cow. I was later told that all this was interpreted as meaning that the father of the dead woman's husband had failed to give to his ancestor one of the cows which he had received for a daughter, hence vengeance had been taken on his son's wife.

After the seance a fowl was killed; this, falling on its back, was taken as proof that what the soothsayer had said was correct.

1: Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1920)1932
FE11 Tallensi FE11
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622 Nangoot people wished to make war on them, the *Ten'dan'* would stop
793 them. The murderer will thus escape. The head Chief had not any
628 power to tell the *Kambon-nab'* of the murderer's *teya* to hand him over, but he would bring cows and purify the land.

622 'When murderer and murdered man were from the same *teya* or
793 same section, the murderer was not tried or killed, but he would have to leave the town. If he remained behind, and heard the funeral custom of his victim, or if he ate any food or drank any water in which the dead man's cloth had been dipped, he would die. His family would bring a cow, sheep, and goat to the Chief. The cow was handed to the *Ten'dan'*, who gave it to the land, saying, "A young rascal has destroyed, and they have brought their gifts, that I may receive and give you, that you may hide the sin, and that people may sleep (lit. that sleep may sleep), the corn bloom, child-bearing continue, and marriages be celebrated".

793 'A *Ten'dan'* was not allowed to ask the land to punish any one.[1] He
627 could not do so; the land must not hate any one, but love all men alike, even murderers. The murderer would leave with his wife and family and never return. He might go to his in-laws; if he were ever to return, he would die, the *tobog'* of the murdered man would kill him.'[2]

793 *Suicide* (*Ko-fo-meya*): 'The family of the suicide took a cow, a sheep,
762 and a goat and handed them to the *Ten'dan'* for the land. He sacrificed it, saying: "A man has made heart
782 (i.e. got angry) and killed himself; that is finished, but a wife remains, a boy remains, let them sleep well; do not let this same thing return".
● [761] A suicide had already spoken before birth; he had made a vow, he would die as a man, *buda kum*.'[3]

622 All important matters were discussed by the Chief, *Ten'dan'*, and
634 section-heads.
793

Succession to Ten'dan': 'When a *Ten'dan'* died, and while his funeral
793 custom was being made, they called a *bay* (soothsayer), meeting at
787 the *zoy* hut, outside the compound, and, in the presence of the Elders, but not of the Chief, consulted and selected a new *Ten'dan'*. Any one might become *Ten'dan'* except any member of the Chief's family. A brother might succeed a brother.'[4]

[1] But see p. 376.

[2] There seems here a clear distinction between murdering or killing a clansman and a stranger.

[3] A natural death is often known as *bum pok kum* (a woman's death).

[4] This is not so among the Nankanse.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

The idea of witchcraft is not
easily reconcilable with the structure of Tale society, dominated as it is by the patrilineal principle. As we know,[1] the residential unit is based on the agnatic lineage and the local community as a whole is based on lineage grouping. Most corporate and co-operative activities depend on lineage ties. The notion of maleficent secret malice involved in the idea of witchcraft is incompatible with the structure of the localized lineage. The occurrence of witchcraft within a lineage would poison the mutual confidence of agnates, disrupt their corporate relationships, and so throw social life into confusion. As it is, the pegging of witchcraft to the uterine line serves to circumvent any danger it might be to the community. An accusation of witchcraft does not implicate the lineage. It is an individual matter, and other individuals on whom it might be expected to throw suspicion are scattered through various lineages and clans. They may protest, but they have no means of taking organized action in defence of their reputation. In any case, an accusation of witchcraft has a very limited range of reaction. Other lineages and families than those injured by the alleged witch do not feel the injury, and even if they harbour uterine kin of the accused person, self-interest prompts them to disregard the implications of the accusation. The folk-lore of witchcraft provides loopholes for such adaptations of logic to social realities. Some say, for example, that a person only becomes a bad witch if his or her mother gives him or her 'witch's medicine' to eat in infancy.

The hereditary transmission of the capacity of being a witch is not connected with the blood (*ziem*), according to Tale physiological ideas. Both parents transmit their blood to their offspring, as can be seen from the fact that children may resemble either parent in looks. It is solely a matter of the eye (*nif*, pl. *nini*)—not the physical eye but the inner, clairvoyant eye of the witch.

Uterine Kinship and the Notion of Tyuk

The social definition of uterine descent in terms of the notion of witchcraft is consistent with its functions in the structure of Tale society. The meaning of *soog* to the native is neatly symbolized in this notion. And this is true, also, of the only other attribute of social personality that is held to follow the uterine connexion. This is summed up in the concept of *tyuk*.

A person through whose words or actions fighting that leads to the slaying of a man or men is instigated bears a particular kind of mystical responsibility. The slaying of a man gives rise to a chain of mystical blood-guilt, and the person who bears the guilt of instigation may have been an unwitting agent and unaware of his guilt. Supposing, for example, I summon a man from another settlement to come and see me about something, and on his way home he meets a man to whom he owes a debt. Supposing the two men have an argument which ends in

[1] *Dynamics of Clanship*, ch. x.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

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blows and my visitor gets killed by accident. Then the slayer will bear one kind of mystical blood-guilt and I will bear the *tyuk* guilt. I may not realize this; indeed, it may not be discovered until, on the occasion of my death, the diviner reveals that my ancestor spirits caused my death in retribution for my unpurged *tyuk* guilt. This was the case with Siiyɛlib of Tongo. When he died it was revealed through divination that he had borne the *tyuk* guilt for the punitive expedition against the Hill Talis twenty-five years previously. He had lodged a complaint against a Yinduuri man with the District Commissioner, and the white man's attempt to bring the Yinduuri man to book had led to the first brush with the Hill Talis. Other incidents followed, but the real reason why the white man launched a punitive attack on the Hill Talis a year or so later was because he had been enraged by the insults and defiance of the people of Yinduuri when he went to arrest the abductor of Siiyɛlib's wife and child. The test of historical accuracy would have been quite irrelevant in this context. Siiyɛlib's clansmen were interpreting the facts subjectively, in accordance with the native system of moral values and mystical beliefs, so as to fit his death logically to the morally and ritually significant events of his social biography.

A person who bears *tyuk* guilt must be ritually cleansed—'to wash *tyuk* (*su tyuk*)' is the technical expression—or else he and his family will be dogged by sickness, death, and other disasters. After the cleansing rites, the medicinal roots used are wrapped tightly in the skin of a species of civet cat (*tyuk*—hence the general term for this complex of ideas and actions) and the bundle is lashed securely to a rafter of the man's room. It must never be disturbed; if it is, quarrelling and fighting break out. A strong wind shaking the rafters of the room is enough to stir up strife. *Tyuk* once incurred remains a taint for ever; for it is really the evocation of a latent proclivity (so one must interpret the ideas of the natives on this subject) that goes with the uterine line. When a man undergoes the *tyuk* cleansing rites he summons all his *saarət* who are known to him to come and 'eat' the medicine with him, for this dangerous proclivity once evoked in one of them involves them all.

The concept of *tyuk* guilt and its connexion with the uterine line is less explicit than that of witchcraft. There is no idea of its being a potentiality transmitted by birth from mother to child. Even more than witchcraft it is a *post hoc* inference, but the natives do not explicitly attach a *propter hoc* interpretation to it. Uterine kin do not share their *soog*'s *tyuk* guilt; they are, as it were, mystically contaminated by it, by reason of their *soog* tie. As one informant put it, *tyuk* is 'contagious to (*de lɔŋəra*)' *saarət* like a disease, or it 'kindles (*de ta'agəra*)' *saarət* like a spreading fire. If a man has incurred and washed *tyuk* then the most trivial argument in which he happens to be involved is often in danger of becoming a real quarrel; and his *saarət* also become hot-tempered, or, perhaps, become prone to give vent to hot temper.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

602 a woman marries she does not forfeit her status as a daughter of her
593 natal lineage (*pɔɣayabəlɔg*) or lose her personal ties with her parents and siblings. We have discussed this, in its broader aspects, in our previous volume[1] and confine ourselves here to family ties. Throughout her life she keeps in close touch with her parents and siblings and other members of her clan, especially her close agnates. If, as is common, other daughters of her clan have married into her husband's clan, these will be the classificatory co-wives with whom she has most contact and to whom she gives and from whom she receives most help, kindness, and support. She visits her natal settlement, as well as her sisters married elsewhere, regularly, and is often visited by members of her parental family. She not only has emotional bonds with her natal family that time never erases, but she also retains certain privileges, which have almost the force of rights, in it and in her natal clan, as we have shown in our previous volume. Her natal family and clan also have claims on her all her life. This is strongly marked in the first two or three years of marriage, before motherhood, habit, and an increasing share in its routine have knit her firmly into her conjugal family.

574 In the early years of marriage a woman seldom lets an opportunity
593 of visiting her natal family go by. She calls in to see how they are on her way to or from market. Now and then she comes to stay a few days. If she is ill she will generally come to stay with her mother, who will tend her much more carefully than her co-wives or in-laws. When Təŋ-Yikpɛmdaan's daughter developed an asthmatic complaint she stayed with her parents for nearly a year. When Da'amo'o's wife went down with guinea-worm she took her three-months-old baby and went to her father's house until she was cured, though it is considered a risky thing to take so young an infant out of its father's house. At sowing or harvest time a man often sends for a young married daughter who has no child to come and help. At all times a married daughter is informed, and sometimes sent for, if there is serious sickness in her parental home. She must be sent for if a member of her parental family dies; and she will go even if it means leaving a tiny infant in the care of a co-wife for a day or two.

●761 On this matter Tallensi are extremely sensitive, for death is the great
602 test of all social ties among them. All relatives of the dead, and especially the principal mourners—parents, spouses, children, siblings—have defined ritual observances, ritual duties, and practical tasks in mortuary and funeral ceremonies. A death often comes as a shock to these close relatives, and especially the death of a parent or sibling to a married daughter of the family. Her mother-in-law or husband will break the news gently to her with a tactful periphrasis. But she must be told and sent for, else she—and, backing her up, her conjugal family—would be deeply offended. On her part, not to go when thus summoned would

[1] *Dynamics of Clanship*, ch. ix.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

be a grievous sin against her parents and her ancestors, sure to bring misfortune on her and her children.

I was the unsuspecting witness of the strength of a woman's filial devotion, brought out by the crisis of death, at Sawɔŋba's burial ceremony. Sawɔŋba's daughter married a Tɛnzugu man against her father's wish. To add insult to injury, when Sawɔŋba sent messengers to demand a cow of the bride-price, his son-in-law turned them away with contempt. As the girl refused to leave her husband, Sawɔŋba cursed her, and, being a leper who knew he had not long to live, expressly forbade her to come to his funeral. She was not told of his death, but heard of it indirectly. On the day of the burial, during one of the major rites, there was a sudden commotion in the crowd around the gateway. A young woman dashed forward, making for the homestead. I could see the strained and agitated look on her face as she passed me. But at once one of Sawɔŋba's classificatory sons darted forward, seized her, and dragged her back to the tree where the elders sat. For a minute or two nothing but a wildly shouting mob could be seen under the tree. Then the girl struggled out, sobbing aloud, her body covered with bruises where she had been beaten by her enraged brothers and clansmen. Followed by execrations, she was escorted by one of the elders to where her husband and a party of his lineage kin were waiting. Only the fear of bloodshed, which would make the affair into that much-dreaded thing, a 'case for the white man (*nasaara yɛl*)', had restrained them from interfering. Sawɔŋba's sons and lineage kin did not see the pathos of their sister's action. They were thoroughly incensed, and called it an insult. Had her husband wished to behave properly, he would have sent an elder of his lineage to beg Sawɔŋba's pardon while he was still alive, or, at any rate, to beg the head of Sawɔŋba's medial lineage to intercede with his sons when he heard of Sawɔŋba's death.

These bonds of a woman with her parental family play an important part in Tale domestic economy. After the harvest there is always a great coming and going of daughters to and from their parental homes. And no man would let his daughter or sister depart, at this time, without a gift of a well-filled basket of grain. This is one way in which a woman builds up her own private resources out of which she provides little luxuries, utensils, and clothes for herself and by means of which she often tides the family over a lean period. This is a privilege, but it has almost the force of a right. Occasionally an elderly woman without a son, or, as sometimes happens nowadays, with her only son away for long in Ashanti or the Colony, is left without proper support in her husband's home. She can then go back to her father's home and is entitled to her sustenance as of right. The services a woman's husband renders to her father, now and then, in the early years of marriage, the interest she has in her brother's children, the importance attached to

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

kinship ties with the mother's brother and his lineage, are all evidence of the imperishability of a woman's ties with her parental family.

Last but not least, a woman continues all her life to be under the care of her patrilineal ancestors. She must observe their totemic taboos. One of them is her spirit guardian (*seyər*), to whom her husband will have to send animals on her behalf as sacrifices on critical occasions such as her first confinement, and from whose tutelage she must be ritually released on death. Whenever an important sacrifice to these ancestors takes place in her paternal home she is told, and has the right to participate and to receive a definite share of the sacrificial meat. She has duties to these lineage ancestors too. Thus whenever a shrine of a lineage founder passes to a new lineage head, a daughter of the lineage is selected by divination to fetch it to its new home. Her good or ill fortune as wife and mother depends very much on that occult arbiter of life which the Tallensi conceive of as a personal Predestined Fate (*Nuor Yin*); and this is associated with one's patrilineal ancestors. If a woman's children die one after another she is being dogged by an evil Predestiny; and only her paternal kin can perform the ritual of exorcising it. Finally, when she dies, though she is buried by her husband's lineage according to their rites, and her spirit is aggregated to those of their ancestors, since it is her sons who will sacrifice to and worship her spirit, her paternal kin also perform a short and symbolic funeral ceremony for her. Thus she is 'brought home (*mar kul*)' to be received amongst her paternal ancestors, and the cycle of her life is completed.

The Opposition between the Kinship Ties and the Marital Ties of Spouses, and its Resolution

All her life a woman is subject to the pull of her patrilateral kinship ties. As a wife, however, she must submit more and more to the contrary pull of her marital ties. Her husband is even more strongly ruled by his ties with his natal family and patrilineal kin. Many of the chances and changes of marriage come down to the question of how the partners adjust themselves to the opposing loyalties and interests associated with their divergent kinship ties. A marriage reaches stability when the partners achieve common interests and mutual bonds strong enough to hold them together in the face of their respective patrilateral kinship ties. That is why the birth of children plays such a vital part in stabilizing a marriage.

Marriage, then, is in one aspect a unique relationship between one man and one woman; in this context, peculiarities of personality influence the fate of a particular marriage. In another aspect, or more accurately, perhaps, at the other end of the scale of marriage relations, it is a union between a man and a woman who represent and remain

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

water lowered. Tallensi think it is essential for the health of the mother and babe, and one important item in it is forcing some of the decoction down the babe's throat. Whether or not it actually has a cleansing or invigorating effect must be left to medical judgement. For the native women it has the double significance of an ordeal, and a prescribed treatment that they would not dream of neglecting.

As we have seen, the care of the child on the ritual side falls on its father. The much more exacting physical care of the child in its parlous passage through infancy is its mother's responsibility. This is stressed when Tallensi insist that it is not on account of a magical taboo but because a child is still partly dependent on the breast until it is about three, that sexual intercourse between a man and his nursing wife is discontinued. They say that a child requires the undivided care of its mother until it can run about and eat solid food by itself, and that it will wilt away through lack of nourishment if she conceives prematurely. Nursing mothers become pregnant only too often through lack of self-control, but this is never condoned by public opinion. The only time a Tale woman tries to induce an abortion is when such an accident happens, for no sacrifice is too great to preserve her living child.

When Tale parents are asked what were the special difficulties they had to overcome in rearing their children, they always mention sickness first. Mothers especially have a great dread of sickness in their children. One does not notice this in the easy-going, placid atmosphere of a well-conducted family when there is no 'sleeplessness' (*gogingara*), to use the apt native euphemism for sickness. But one sees it when a child gets ill. Minor ailments throw its mother into a state of anxiety. Serious illness puts her into a panic or prostrates her with grief. She refuses food—which is always regarded by the natives as a sign of severe illness or great emotional distress—and stops all her work. I have seen illness in adolescent or adult children have this effect on women; and the younger the child the more do they suffer.

It is easy to imagine what the death of a child in infancy or childhood means to its mother. A man is expected to control his emotions, but a woman may express her grief freely. A father's grief is palliated, also, by the active role he takes in the ritual by which the emotional shock is neutralized. A woman's part in this ritual is more passive and she feels the blow more acutely in consequence. A mother remains inconsolable for many days and even weeks over the loss of a child.

The way Tallensi think of a mother's grief over the death of her child was brought home to me when Dinkaha's little girl of about three died after a lingering and horrible illness. He had been devoted to the child and was greatly distressed, but in a few days he had accepted the diviner's verdict philosophically and was his old bouncing self again. His wife, on the other hand, broke down completely. Then, a couple of weeks later, news came that an older child of hers by a former husband, with

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

761 whom it was living, had also died suddenly. Diŋkaha, greatly concerned
593 for his wife, warned all the members of his family not to say anything to her about it. If she heard of this calamity now, he said, she would surely die. Later on, when she had settled down again he would himself break the news to her.

765 Incidentally, fathers do not always get over the death of a child,
593 whether an infant or an adult, with ease. It is easier for a young man, the Tallensi say, because he thinks to himself that his wife can still bear children to him. But even young men have been known to abandon
[762] themselves to despair. An extreme case was that of Dəyayam, who pierced himself with a poisoned arrow when his favourite child died; and the average Taləŋ, it must be remembered, speaks of suicide with contempt. The grief of a father when a grown-up or adolescent son dies is very moving. When Pumaan's son Kpeemi and Tinta'aləm's son Suor, both fine young men in the twenties, died, it was as if a shock ran through the whole community. On both occasions the men of the clan gathered in full force to mourn at the bereaved house and the atmosphere of tragedy was felt by all. I cannot forget the picture of Pumaan, as taciturn and dour a man as one could meet anywhere, holding himself tautly, his face ashen, his eyes staring ahead, stoically suppressing his despair as an elder should do. Tɛndaan Teroog, an old man over seventy, made no pretence of stoicism when his eldest and only adult son died leaving a number of wives and children. He simply pined away and followed his son to the grave in a couple of months.

593 When Tallensi say that it is hard to bring a child into the world, they
769 have in mind more than the physiological facts of birth, and the dangers of infancy and childhood. They think of the whole gamut of social and emotional relations between parents and children arising out of the fact of birth. For a Taləŋ, as we have seen, does not become altogether independent of his parents until their death—nor, indeed, even after their death. The pragmatic bonds of jural and economic dependence become transformed into the equally strong, nay stronger bonds of ritual dependence on the ancestor spirits of whom the parents are the immediate prototypes and intermediaries. And in many ways the ritual relationships of the Tallensi with the spirits of their parents give a truer insight into the parent-child bond than their visible behaviour towards one another. 'Fear the dead but do not fear the living (*Zom kpiim ka di zo vopa*)', says one of their proverbs which enshrines their feeling that a person is under a far more compelling bond with his parents when they are dead than during their life. We shall return to this presently.

593 The gist of our analysis is that to the Tallensi parenthood means responsibility that weighs heavily at times. This comes out both in the notion that bearing or begetting a child is hard and in the correlated notion of the importance of rearing. At the same time there is no native, man or woman, who would not insist that a person has lived in vain if he

3: Fortes E 5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

in real life and in part distorted reflections of the tensions that exist between parents and children in reality. It is no misrepresentation to describe them as a standardized and highly elaborated picture of the parents as they might appear to a young child in real life—mystically omnipotent, capricious, vindictive, and yet beneficent and long-suffering; but the emphasis is far more on the persecuting than on the protecting attributes. The distortion is most striking in the case of a mother's spirit. All ancestor spirits are apt to reveal themselves more often by the misfortune they inflict than by the benefits they bring. They emerge as sanctions of conduct more by reason of the punishments they bring down on wrongdoers than because of the benefits they confer for right doing. But the spirits of female ancestors are believed to be specially hard, cruel, and capricious. This is remarkable when we consider the love and devotion a mother shows for her child throughout his life. As we have observed elsewhere,[1] there is a never-ending struggle between a man and his ancestors. It is psychologically rooted in the relations of parents and children during the lifetime of the parents. Sacrifices and prayers are reminiscent of the principle of reciprocity in the real relations of parents and children. They contain the same elements of acquiescence, justice, and hidden coercion. They show another aspect, though, in the propitiation, reverence, and gratitude they often express.[2]

We can see why filial piety towards the dead parents is more strongly stressed than towards the living. While he is alive a person's father has direct jural and ritual authority over him; when he dies, the father becomes the paramount sanction of moral conduct for him; and this applies, *mutatis mutandis*, in only a lesser degree to the mother. The oath 'by my father and his goatskin (or sheepskin) and his three cowries' discussed in our previous book[3] is one proof of this. The centre of gravity of the whole social system of the Tallensi is the relationship of father and son, and it is the idea of filial piety that keeps this relationship in balance in the face of all the forces that tend to divide father and son. In this as in other respects the Tallensi are typical of patrilineal and patriarchal societies of simple culture from many parts of the globe, both ancient and modern.

[1] Cf. *Dynamics of Clanship*, p. 145.

[2] As death, among the Tallensi, is always believed to be mystically caused by a particular ancestor spirit or a group of ancestor spirits (material causes such as sickness being recognized as necessary but not sufficient without the mystical adjunct), it follows that a dead father or mother can kill (*ku*) his or her own child. The converse is impossible, since children, in life, have no jurisdiction over parents. I have asked Tallensi if patricide ever occurs or is known to have occurred. My most trusted informants said they had never heard of a case and thought the very idea abhorrent beyond measure. The idea of matricide they considered even more vile and unnatural.

[3] Cf. *Dynamics of Clanship*, p. 66.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

and are taunted for months afterwards by their fellows. But these are not the reasons why children so rarely commit this impropriety. It is because of the intimacy, the closeness to each other in daily life, of brother and sister. Children do not need to be told that it is wrong to copulate with a sibling of the same joint family; they know it themselves. And, in fact, children from the age of 6 or 7 and upwards always say, with an expression of disgust, that sexual play with one's own siblings is wrong. Moreover, though they are not taught it as an avoidance, they are well aware of the conventional attitudes on the subject from listening to adult conversation.[1]

Incidentally, there are no taboos on conversation on sex matters among the Tallensi. Men, women, and children are all outspoken about sexual matters, though young women are apt to use euphemisms and to talk more circumspectly than men. Some men also say that it is embarrassing to talk about sexual subjects in front of young wives or female relatives-in-law. But no native hesitates to discuss these subjects in the presence of his sister.

These ties of mutual affection and devotion between *soog* siblings last throughout life and are extended to their children too. One sees this most dramatically in the grief people show, and especially women, over the death of a *soog* sibling. Tallensi say that very often the loss of a full brother is a greater shock to a woman than the death of her husband. A husband is replaceable, a full brother not, they add. When Kpe'emi died his wife fainted and afterwards sat about disconsolately, weeping at intervals for days. His *soog* sister also fainted, but, the men said, it had been much more difficult to revive her than her sister-in-law and she became ill with grief. Seeing the two young women together one could not doubt that it was the sister who felt the blow worst.

Another vivid demonstration of the strength of this tie between full siblings occurred when Tendaan Teroog performed the succession ceremony on succeeding to the custody of his maximal lineage *bɔŋar*. A large crowd had gathered, chiefly men—clansmen, and neighbours and matrilateral kinsmen of Teroog's maximal lineage. Amongst them my

[1] The psychological undercurrents of these conventional attitudes do not concern us here, but it may be remarked that there is probably a strong and partly overt sexual component in the affective relations of brother and sister. I was struck by this when I once had an opportunity of observing the behaviour of Yamzooya (aged about 11) and his *soog* sister (aged about 8) who were playing together in a corner of the room where I was chatting to their father. The children, who were quite naked, stood embracing each other, the boy with his legs round his sister's, and they twisted and wriggled about as if they were engaged in a mixture of an orgiastic dance and a wrestling-match. They were both in a state of high excitement, panting and giggling and muttering to each other, with obvious sexual pleasure. They seemed to be oblivious of their surroundings. This game went on for about twenty minutes after which they separated and lolled back as if exhausted. These two children were most attached to each other.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

named person but also, and chiefly, as a member of such-and-such a clan and lineage. When Tallensi discuss the internal structure of a maximal lineage what they emphasize is the clan and lineage origin of the several 'mothers' of its segments.

When a new segment begins to crystallize out in any lineage, it requires a *bɔyar* of its own to symbolize its identity. And since its genealogical distinctness comes from its progenitrix, its *bɔyar* must come from her lineage. This is simply a consequence of the fact that the notion of the *bɔyar* is a ritual conceptualization and sanction of the singularity, as well as of the unity and the continuity of the lineage. A new lineage segment can only arise, among the Tallensi, by derivation from an existing lineage. It is, one might say, a rearrangement within the existing social system, and does not represent a breach of continuity. The *bɔyar* symbolizing it is, similarly, an offshoot and replica of an existing *bɔyar*. To put this in another way, a person's status (i.e. the sum total of his rights and duties in relation to Tale society at large and to all the other members of the society) is at bottom determined by his or her descent, as we have previously shown. When he becomes an ancestor spirit his mystical attributes and powers are not absolutely autonomous arising solely from the fact that he begot sons and then died. Whatever their real psychological roots may be, in Tale religious thought these attributes and powers belong to an ancestor spirit because when he died he 'went to join his forefathers (*kyɛŋ paag u banam*)' and because he represents his whole line of ancestors in a particular situation or context. Hence every ancestor shrine either is or in course of time becomes the altar for a group of lineally related ancestors and ancestresses, never for one ancestor alone. A shrine consecrated to a particular ancestor is *ipso facto* consecrated to his agnatic descendants that come between him and the owner of the shrine. Sacrifice is offered and prayer addressed to the whole sequence of ancestors, in order of ascent; for the more remote ancestor can only be approached through the less remote. This principle is well illustrated in the examples of *bakologo* complexes quoted earlier. It applies to both patrilineal and matrilateral ancestors. Even when a man sacrifices to his own father's or mother's spirit he invokes them to 'attend with all their forefathers (*ba dɔl ni ba banam waabi*)'. Conversely, when an ancestor intervenes in his descendant's life he can only do so through the medium of those who came between him and his descendant.

It would take us too far afield to discuss all the evidence of the significance of this principle in Tale religion. One more item must suffice. According to Tale thought, an unnatural death is one that is shown by divination *not* to have been mystically caused by the ancestors. The physical cause of the death makes no difference to the issue. A person may die of old age; if none of his ancestors claim to have caused his death, this is a sign that he was not 'human (*ninvoo*)'—that is a full social being. He was a disguised bush-sprite. He is not given human burial,